amongst tea producing member countries on the production, productivity and research. However, broad aims and objectives of the Association have not yet been finalised. Positive responses are understood to have been received by Sri-Lanka from some tea producing countries. However detailed information in this regard is not yet available.

(c) During the meeting of Indo-Sri Lanka Working Group held on 18th-19th July, 1994, it was inter-alia agreed that the preparatory meeting of the proposed Association might be held at Colombo at a convenient date in early, 1995.

Decline in Tea Exports

1808. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the export of Indian tea has declined by 40 per cent in the current year;

(b) if so, the reasons for this decline; and

(c) steps being contemplated to improve the export of tea?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Exports of tea during the first two months of the current financial year viz. April-May, 1994 as compared to the corresponding period of previous year, have been as under:—

Years	Exports Quantity (Mn. kgs.)
1994-95 (April—May)	15.56
1993-94 (April—May)	19.17
Decrease (%)	(—)18.83

(b) Reasons or lower exports have been lower imports by Iran, Russia and other CIS countries due to their internal economic problems.

(c) In order to step up exports of tea, Russian authorities have been requested to procure higher quantities of teas from India under the debt repayment mechanism. A delegation had also visited Iran recently to sort out issues regarding delays in opening of LCs by Iranian authorities in respect of contracts signed for exports of teas to that country. Other steps taken to boost exports of teas include uninational promotional campaigns through Tea Board's offices abroad. It consists of (i) participation in trade fairs/exhibitions (ii) media campaign to increase consumer awareness towards various unique characteristics of Indian (iii) media campaign to popularise Indian Tea through Tea Board marketing symbol and (iv) support to various foreign brands containing Indian tea. A part of the expenditure incurred by importers for promotional campaigns is met from Tea Board's budget. Tea Board has also undertaken Darjeeling and Assam Logo Campaign in U.K.

Tender Floated by DGS&D for plywood

1809. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:—

(a) whether DGS&D floated a tender for plywood for the year 1993-94 inspite of the fact that the said case was undecided at that time;

(b) if so, the reasons thereof;

(c) whether rules were misinterpreted to confer the benefits to a particular party;

(d) whether Government are considering to hold an independent enquiry before awarding any contract; and

(e) if so, the details thereof, and if not, the reasons for the same.